

*The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa:  
Apocalypse, the First Crusade, and the Armenian Diaspora*

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**I**N 1066/7, A TURKISH EMIR named Afshin<sup>1</sup> led his troops on a raid on the numerous monasteries of the Amanus mountains, north on Antioch.<sup>2</sup> The result, mourned the twelfth-century Armenian chronicler Matt'eos Urhayets'i (Matthew of Edessa, ca. 1070–ca. 1136), was that “many of the holy monks were subjected to the edge of the sword and to being burned; moreover, their corpses became food for the beasts and the birds.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the holiness of the monks, their suffering and death fulfilled divine will, accomplishing the words of Psalm 78: “Their young men were devoured by fire and no one grieved for their virgins; their priests fell under the sword and no one grieved for their widows.”<sup>4</sup> The biblical verses appeared as more than a rhetorical flourish from a clerical writer: they evoked themes woven throughout Matthew's chronicle. While the immolated youths and the slain priests of Psalm 78 died by the will of their own wrathful God, the psalm ended with a comforting evocation of God's love for the tribe of Judah and for his servant David. Similarly, Matthew's chronicle depicted an angry God punishing his wayward flock (Christian Armenians), but ultimately it focused on an abiding sense of the imminent arrival of the end of the world and the attendant promise of redemption.

The massacre on the mountains was evidence in a long list of violent episodes that proved that Matthew lived in a dark era dominated by God's wrath. Like other Christian chroniclers, including Hydatius of fifth-century Hispania and Ralph Glaber of eleventh-century Burgundy,<sup>5</sup> Matthew was inspired to write by the sense of living at the turn of the ages, watching the ancient, corrupt order peel away and the new, perhaps glorious, perhaps terrifying, emerge. All

<sup>1</sup> Named Oshen in the 1898 edition, and Evshen in the 1869 Jerusalem edition of Matthew's text, *Patmut'iwn* (Jerusalem, 1869), 223. Dostourian surmises that this is a version of the Persian name Afshin.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, I will be citing the Armenian text of Matthew of Edessa's chronicle, using the 1898 Vagharshapat edition, which, as discussed below, relies upon the largest number of manuscripts and includes some critical apparatus: Matt'eos Urhayets'i [Matthew of Edessa], *Zhamanakagrut'iwn* (Vagharshapat, 1898),

hereafter Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Ara Dostourian's English translation: Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades*, trans. A. E. Dostourian (Lanham, Md., 1993), hereafter Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*.

<sup>3</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 185; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 125.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 78: 63–64. This passage also evokes Ps. 79: 2–3: “Their blood flowed like water all around Jerusalem and there was no one

to bury them” (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 186; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 125).

<sup>5</sup> R. W. Burgess, ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana* (Oxford, 1993); Burgess, “Hydatius and the Final Frontier: The Fall of the Roman Empire and the End of the World,” in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. W. Mathisen and H. S. Sivan (Aldershot, 1996), 321–32; Rodulphus Glaber, *The Five Books of the Histories*, trans. J. France and P. Reynolds (Oxford, 1989).

three chroniclers faced the challenge of reconciling faith in a triumphalist Christianity with defeat, disaster, or occupation. Matthew's apocalyptic focus has received little attention, unlike Hydatius's and Ralph's. Only by placing Matthew within his cultural context, that of a diasporic Armenian community coming to terms with the effects of the First Crusade, can we understand how Matthew understood the suffering of the Armenians and unravel his seemingly contradictory depiction of non-Armenians.

Writing between 1101/2 and the 1130s while Edessa was under Frankish rule, Matthew took as the subject of his chronicle "the horrible punishment (*barkut'iwn*), which the Armenian nation endured at the hands of the long-haired and abominable Elamites, the nation of the Turks, and their brothers, the Romans."<sup>6</sup> The Turks and the Byzantines (and later the Franks) were at the same time agents of divine retribution, the foot soldiers of Satan's army, and the victims of the same punishments as the Armenians. Episodes of violence punctuate Matthew's history with metronomic regularity. Not simply an account of events, his chronicle is a prehistory of the Apocalypse, and violence is the muscle that gives his history motion. Matthew drew his expectations of the coming Apocalypse from a number of sources, the most important of which was the Syriac account by an anonymous seventh-century author now referred to as pseudo-Methodius.<sup>7</sup> One of the most influential apocalypses of the medieval period, it introduced the figure of the last emperor, who would defeat the infidel people who oppressed Christians and then place his crown on the Holy Cross at Golgotha, allowing the return of Christ. The narrative spread quickly, becoming a part of Byzantine and western Christian apocalyptic traditions as well. Matthew, however, employed apocalyptic signs and narratives with a different intent than did many other medieval apocalypticists; his intent was not to strengthen the bulwarks of an embattled community, but to make clear its fragility and fast-approaching demise. Yet that demise would not be the result of Turkish massacres or Byzantine duplicity.

6 Matthew uses the word *barkut'iwn*, meaning "anger, punishment, or calamity," both here and throughout his chronicle to describe the suffering of the Armenians (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 112–13; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 83).

7 P. Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985); G. J. Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (Leuven, 1993); and W. J. Aerts and G. A. A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: die Ältesten Griechischen und*

*Lateinischen Übersetzungen*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 1998); C. Villagomez, "Christian Salvation through Muslim Domination: Divine Punishment and Syriac Apocalyptic Expectation in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *MedE* 4 (1998): 203–18. The figure of the "last emperor" does not appear in the Armenian tradition until the later tenth century, and then in a revised version of the *Life of Nerses*, a frequently edited text concerning the prophecies of the fourth-century Armenian patriarch, translated by

J.-R. Emine, "Généalogie de la famille de saint Grégoire et vie de saint Nersès," in *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie*, ed. V. Langlois (Paris, 1969), 2: 21–41; R. Thomson, "Crusades through Armenian Eyes," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. A. E. Laiou and R. Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, D. C., 2001), 74–75. For further bibliography on apocalypticism, see note 85.

Matthew's apocalyptic fears arose from the disquieting sense that Armenians, particularly those living in diasporic communities such as Edessa, were fading from sight, bleached out by Byzantine, Frankish, and Turkish cultural radiation. The chronicle is Matthew's search for an explanation of why Armenians were becoming indistinguishable from their neighbors and rulers; he cast the answer in the language of violence, which often stood in for the cultural violence Matthew felt Armenians were suffering.

Paradoxically, the description and memory of violence in Matthew's work was a product of a society in which the boundaries separating one religious and ethnic community from another were transparent, crossed and recrossed by soldiers, generals, and aristocrats with little sense of any change. Matthew pointed out that Armenians inflicted suffering on each other as often as the Turks or Byzantines did, and to him such "betrayals" were the most fascinating and revealing kind of violence. His real concern was thus Armenian society, proud of its ancient heritage but blind to its current calamities, consuming itself in betrayal and backstabbing.

### *Historiography*

Matthew's chronicle has been used widely by Byzantinists and Islamicists, as well as by historians of medieval Armenia and of the crusades, for the better part of two centuries; it is arguably one of the most important historical narratives from twelfth-century Syria. Portions of Matthew's chronicle have been available in translation since François Martin and Jacques Chahan de Cirbied (1772–1834) first translated it in 1811.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, however, Martin did not translate Matthew at all; he published that part of Matthew's work that purported to be a transcription of a letter written by the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes (969–976) to the Armenian king Ashot III (952–977). Matthew's debut in the academic world was thus in Byzantine dress. Édouard Dulaurier (1807–1881) published a complete translation of the chronicle in 1858, portions of which were included in the *Recueil des historiens des croisades* in 1869.<sup>9</sup> The first edition of the Armenian text was published in Jerusalem in 1869, based on two

<sup>8</sup> Matthew of Edessa, *Détails historiques de la première expédition des Chrétiens dans la Palestine sous l'empereur Zimiscès*, trans. F. Martin, notes by J. Chahan de Cirbied (Paris, 1811). A second excerpt, focusing on the First Crusade, was published a year later: *Notice de deux manuscrits arméniens contenant l'histoire de Mathieu Eretz et extrait de cette histoire, relatif à la première croisade en arménien et en français* (Paris, 1812).

<sup>9</sup> Matthew of Edessa, *Chronique de Matthieu d'Édesse (962–1136)*, trans. É. Dulaurier (Paris, 1858); *Recueil des historiens des croisades, Documents arméniens* (Paris, 1869), 1: 4–150. Dulaurier, however, first published extracts concerning the First Crusade in 1850 (Matthew of Edessa, *Récit de la première croisade*, trans. É. Dulaurier [Paris, 1850]). Dulaurier's translation, however, left out some episodes included in other

editions. His translation was used widely until supplemented by Ara Dostourian's English translation published in 1993 (cited above, n. 2). It was also translated into Turkish by H. Andreasyan (*Urfalı Mateos vekayinâmesi [952–1136] ve Papaz Grigor'un Zeyli [1136–1162]* [Ankara, 1962]).

manuscripts, and another published in Vagharshapat (Etchmiadzin) in Armenia in 1898, based on five manuscripts as well as on the Jerusalem edition.<sup>10</sup> Despite its availability, historians have paid little attention to the internal logic and concerns of the text itself, and instead have used it to corroborate events described in Arabic, Greek, and Latin sources. Aside from the introductions to the French and English translations of the work by Édouard Dulaurier in 1858 and Ara Dostourian in 1993, this is the first critical analysis of Matthew's chronicle in any major European language.<sup>11</sup>

Matthew has sat on the historiographic sidelines for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the language in which he wrote—medieval Armenian. Armenian is generally not one of the primary languages historians of the twelfth-century Middle East consider learning, nor is the twelfth-century Middle East one of the areas Armenologists consider within their realm of expertise. Like the proverbial bridesmaid, Matthew is often cited, but never studied. Examining only the events and dates of specific interest to them, scholars have never confronted Matthew's larger historical agenda. As a result of such normative readings of his text, Matthew's reputation generally has been that of a prejudiced and therefore unreliable historian. The French Armenologist Joseph Laurent, in one of the first careful studies of eleventh-century Edessan history, commented, "Matthew does not merit a blind confidence without study," worrying that perhaps the original text had been altered over time, for it lacked order and organization.<sup>12</sup> In his magisterial work on northern Syria, Claude Cahen suggested that Matthew had "an insatiable hatred of the Greeks."<sup>13</sup> More recently Mark Whittow concurred, considering Matthew to be "anti-Chalcedonian and anti-Byzantine."<sup>14</sup> Accusations of inaccuracy are perhaps not the best form of criticism of Matthew, or of any medieval chronicle. The text is best read not as a description of a world containing discrete and differentiated peoples and cultures, but prescriptively as an attempt to shape a protean cultural landscape into such a world.

10 The 1898 edition was republished in 1991 with a modern Armenian translation by H. Bartik'yan (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, ed. M. Melik-Adamyanyan and N. Ter-Mik'ayelyan [Erevan, 1991]).

11 Brief comments appear in H. Berbérian, "Comptes rendus," *RÉA* 10 (1973–74): 403–6; H. Adjarian, "Matt'eos Urhayec'i," *HA* 67 (1953): 350–54 [in Armenian]; Anneliese Lüders, *Die Kreuzzüge im Urteil syrischer und armenischer Quellen* (Berlin, 1964), 17–19.

12 J. Laurent, "Des Grecs aux Croisés. Étude sur l'histoire d'Édesse entre 1071 et 1098," *Byzantion* 1 (1921): 372–73, reprinted in *Études d'histoire arménienne* (Leuven, 1971), 66–67.

13 C. Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque* (Paris, 1940), 98; Steven Runciman also follows this line, *History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 1952), 2: 483. Modern surveys of crusader and Byzantine history scarcely mention Matthew.

14 M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, 1996), 383.

## Structure of the Chronicle

Matthew's apocalyptic interests explain the numerological drumbeat underlying the tripartite structure of his chronicle, a structure that echoes other Armenian historians such as Movses Xorenats'i, T'ovma Artsruni, and Yovhannes Drasxanakerts'i.<sup>15</sup> Each section covers half the time of the section preceding it, signaling the ascending sequence of violence directed against Armenian individuals and communities.<sup>16</sup> Matthew himself noted the quickening chronological pulse of the world, acknowledging that "we also have become aware of time passing by very quickly, showing us change, decay, and disappearance of what exists and revealing to us the instability of mankind on earth."<sup>17</sup> The first section describes the disappearance of Armenian royal authority in the Caucasus Mountains and eastern highlands through Byzantine subterfuge and Turkish aggression. The second section details the subsequent destruction of Armenian communities at the hands of the Turks, and in the third section Matthew prepares his readers for the coming Apocalypse.

About Matthew himself we know little. He called himself a "monk"<sup>18</sup> as well as a "monastic priest,"<sup>19</sup> though he never named his monastery.<sup>20</sup> He also used the epithet "Urhayets'i" (of Edessa), but never clarified whether he was born in Edessa, or whether his monastery was located there, or both. At some point he moved to the town of K'esun, approximately one hundred miles northwest of Edessa; the last entry in his chronicle, dated to 1136/7, detailed, unusually in the first person, a Turkish attack on the town.<sup>21</sup> He likely died soon

15 J.-P. Mahé, "Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne," *RÉA* 23 (1992): 121–53.

16 The years covered in each part reflected Matthew's interest in numerological approaches to the Apocalypse. The first portion covers the years 952/3 to 1051/2 (Armenian years [AY] 401–500), the second from 1051/2 to 1101/2 (AY 500–550), and the third from 1101/2 to 1136/7 (AY 550–85); thus each portion covers roughly half the period of time of the previous section. Although the second and third sections include an authorial preface, in which Matthew outlined the sources used for the section, as well as explaining how it fit into his historical progression, the first section launches into a historical narrative unpreluded. It is tempting to speculate that the first portion of the chronicle has been lost, including an introduction as well as an account for the year 951/2 (AY 400).

The account concludes in 1136/7 (AY 585), although Matthew indicated his intention to end it in 1131/2 (AY 580) (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 278–80; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 182–83).

17 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 282; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 184.

18 *Vanakan*; Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 113; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 83.

19 Ara Dostourian translates this (in Armenian *erits' vanats'*) as "superior of a monastery," which suggests that Matthew was abbot, but he does not describe other abbots with those words. The modern Armenian translation suggests "chaplain" (*vanerets'*); perhaps the best translation might be "monastic priest." [I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this recommendation.] (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*,

126; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 84).

20 The monastery most prominent in Matthew's account is Karmir Vank' (the "Red Monastery") near K'esun, and while Matthew never directly links himself to the monastery, it was patronized by Kogh Vasil and was the seat of the Pahlavunis in the area. *Kat'olikos* Gregory III Pahlavuni was consecrated here in 1113/4 (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 329–30; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 215). As discussed below, Matthew promoted both Vasil and the Pahlavuni family, and a shared connection to the monastery may further explain his enthusiasm.

21 Matthew referred to Baldwin of Marash, who ruled K'esun, as "our prince" and spoke of God having mercy on the town despite "our sins" (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 368; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 238–39).

after, for his continuator, Gregory the Priest, began his narrative the following year.

It is difficult to be certain when Matthew first began his chronicle. I offer a possible argument, but we do not have sufficient information to be certain. In the introduction to his third section, Matthew listed those patriarchs who were ruling “when my history was begun.”<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, few of the ordination or death dates of the patriarchs given restrict the range of possibilities for the beginning of the chronicle. For example, the career of Symeon II, Greek Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem (1092–99), is the shortest reign of the five patriarchs listed. However, both the dates of Symeon’s ordination as patriarch and his death are poorly substantiated,<sup>23</sup> and we cannot be certain when Matthew believed Symeon held his position. However, Matthew also noted that the year was 6610 *anno mundi*, which produces the date of 1102.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Matthew began this portion of his chronicle with the Armenian year (AY) of 550, which also equals 1101/2. The majority of evidence, therefore, suggests that Matthew began his chronicle in 1101/2, and this is the date I follow.<sup>25</sup>

We can thus gain a rough sense of how long Matthew spent writing his chronicle. In the introduction to his second section, Matthew announced that he has been writing for eight years; thus he completed the first section of his work (covering the years AY 401–500 [952/3–1051/2]) in the year 1109/1110. He further indicated that he had eighty more years to chronicle, giving an intended completion date of AY 580 (1131/2).<sup>26</sup>

Then in his forties, the monk anticipated another two decades of important historical events leading to the Apocalypse. At the beginning of his third section, Matthew tells us he has now been writing for fifteen years, and again signals his intention to end his chronicle in AY 580, indicating that the year at that time was 1116/7.<sup>27</sup> His account actually concluded in 1136/7 (AY 585), five years later than he anticipated, though the account of these additional five years is brief.

Matthew’s intended audience was the Armenians of northern Syria, and his narrative frequently noted events in Edessa and surrounding areas. Only the last section of his chronicle, however, took northern Syria during Matthew’s own life as its primary focus. As

22 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 277; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 181.

23 Johannes Pahlitzsch, “Symeon II. und die Errichtung der lateinischen Kirche von Jerusalem durch die Kreuzfahrer,” in *Militia Sancti Sepulcri: Idea e Istituzioni*, ed. Kaspar Elm and Cosimo Damiano Fonseca [Vatican City, 1998], 341–60).

24 The monk further confused his chronology by adding that “we have not included these last ten years in our chronological considerations”; it is not evident what the chronicler intended by this.

25 Yet Berbérian (“Comptes rendus,” 404) suggests that Matthew began his chronicle in 1113, though he does not give details.

26 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 113–14; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 83.

27 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 278; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 182.

noted earlier, the first two sections were largely dedicated to events in the Armenian kingdoms of the Caucasus Mountains and around Lake Van during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This choice can be ascribed, at least in part, to caution; Matthew himself (perhaps hyperbolically) warned that writing about current events was fraught with peril, noting that “we would like to write about [the Franks’] many malicious deeds, but dare not, since we are under their authority.”<sup>28</sup>

Matthew, however, may have preferred writing about the past and the distant rather than about his own time and place because in the past he could most easily distinguish the apocalyptic violence he sought. From his perspective, the disappearance of the Armenian kingdoms, particularly the Bagratuni kingdom of Ani, was the most traumatic of the “horrible punishments” the Armenians were fated to suffer. Matthew used the Turkish siege and capture of the Armenian city of Artsn in 1049/50, “the beginning of the misfortunes of the Armenians,” to urge his readers to “listen and pay attention to this account of the end and decay of the East—by slow degrees, year by year; for Artsn was the first town which was captured from the Armenians and put to the sword and enslaved.”<sup>29</sup> Matthew notably did not ascribe Artsn’s sack and the massacre and enslavement of its citizens to the city’s sinfulness, as did the eleventh-century chronicler Aristakes Lastivertts’i.<sup>30</sup> Rather, the city’s destruction was a sign of the beginning of a disastrous age. Following Artsn as victims in his litany of punishments were smaller communities such as the aforementioned monasteries in the Amanus Mountains, as well as other cities such as Melitene, Sebasteia, and, finally, in 1064/5 the city Matthew considered the cultural and religious heart of Armenia—Ani. His own city of Edessa had been spared the sieges and massacres others had suffered, but Matthew sought to impress upon his audience the sense that, as Armenians, they were strangers, describing them as “left guardianless in an alien land, since they left their ancestral home.”<sup>31</sup>

Two other, more immediate concerns also inspired Matthew to begin his chronicle. The first was the surprising appearance and success of the First Crusade. The crusades, and the political settlements they produced, were a challenge to Matthew’s sense of a world

28 Matt’eos Urhayets’i; *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 239; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 221. See also R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Adémar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 142–43. In my understanding of Matthew’s view of the past, I have

also been influenced by P. J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994).

29 Matt’eos Urhayets’i; *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 103; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 76–77.

30 Aristakes Lastivertts’i, *Patmut’iwn* (Venice, 1901), 64–69.

31 Matt’eos Urhayets’i; *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 300; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 196.

dominated by the “three nations”—Armenians, Byzantines, and Turks—who were the putative subjects of his chronicle. Although Matthew never accorded the Franks the same status as the other three, he came to know them better than the Byzantines or the Turks. Matthew was likely resident in Edessa when the city came under the rule of Baldwin of Boulogne in 1098, and the Armenian monk spent the remainder of his life under Frankish rule, devoting a considerable portion of the third section of his chronicle to their deeds. Matthew began his work in 1101/2, soon after the First Crusade; its violence, unexpectedness, and even more surprising success likely provided Matthew with the final evidence needed to confirm his sense of a world undergoing momentous change.

The presence of two *kat'oliki*<sup>32</sup> of the Pahlavuni family in early-twelfth-century northern Syria provided Matthew with further incentive to write. The aristocratic Pahlavunis had established a near monopoly on the office of the *kat'olikos*, or patriarch of the Armenian church, in the latter half of the eleventh century. The valiant deeds of the family, a narrative thread running through Matthew's chronicle, provided a connection between events in Armenia (particularly in the kingdom of Ani), and in northern Syria. The origins of the family are obscure,<sup>33</sup> but by the late tenth century they were among the leading aristocrats of the Bagratuni kingdom of Ani. Beginning with Vasak Pahlavuni (d. 1021), *sparapet* (military commander) of Ani, Matthew recounted the family's accomplishments, focusing on a series of prominent members: Vahram (d. 1047), successor to his brother Vasak as *sparapet*,<sup>34</sup> Vasak's son Gregory Magistros (d. 1058), *littérateur* and *doux* of Byzantine Mesopotamia,<sup>35</sup> Gregory's son Vahram (d. 1105), who became the first Pahlavuni patriarch in

32 Correctly transliterated as *kat'ughikos*, but here I use the more familiar Greek-based plural rather than the Armenian *kat'ughikosk'.*

33 Cyril Toumanoff gives the Pahlavunis connections to the ancient Kamsarakan family and thus to the family of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the founder of Christianity in Armenia, but this genealogy is dubious; see his *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, D.C., 1963), 207. The family themselves claimed the connection, perhaps as a way to solidify their hold on the catholicate. Movses Khorenats'i (of

Chorene), a historian whose writings have been dated anywhere from the fifth to the eighth century, recorded that both Saint Gregory and the Kamsarakans were descended from the Iranian Pahlavids; see Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. R. W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 2: 27, 165. While their surname evoked the Arsacid monarchy, Pahlav being both an area in Iran and the name of the two branches of the Arsacid family, the Pahlavunis emerged only in the tenth century and cannot be linked to the Kamsarakans with any certainty.

34 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 98; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 74. See the genealogical chart in M. Leroy, “Grégoire Magistros et les traductions arméniennes d'auteurs grecs,” *AIPHOS* 3 (1935): 263–94.

35 A. Sanjian, “Gregory Magistros: An Armenian Hellenist,” in *TO EAAHNIKON: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, vol. 2, *Byzantinoslavica, Armeniaca, Islamica, the Balkans and Modern Greece*, ed. J. S. Allen et al. (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993), 131–58; Leroy, “Grégoire Magistros,” 263–94; B. L. Chukaszyn, “Échos de légendes épiques iraniennes dans les «lettres» de Grigor Magistros,” *RÉArm* 1 (1964): 321–29.



1065–66 under the name Gregory II,<sup>36</sup> and Gregory's second son Vasak (d. 1077), *doux* of Byzantine Antioch.<sup>37</sup> *Kat'olikos* Gregory II consecrated his two nephews and a grandnephew as bishops during his lifetime, and two of them consecutively succeeded him to the patriarchate. In contrast to his attitude toward almost all other leaders or groups, Matthew rarely criticized the Pahlavunis; even when Gregory II decided to abandon his patriarchal duties to live an eremitic life, which led to a schism in the church, Matthew admired his determination to take on a life of solitude, and only lightly chastised him for his subsequent hostility to his replacement, the *vardapet* George, "for he forgot the vow he had taken to be George's companion in the spiritual life."<sup>38</sup>

Matthew's first contact with the Pahlavunis may have come around 1103/4, shortly after he began his chronicle. In that year, the *kat'olikos* Barsegh Pahlavuni (nephew of Gregory II) came to Edessa, welcomed by the Frankish count Baldwin II.<sup>39</sup> Matthew was likely still living in the city at the time, and given the prominent place of the Pahlavunis in Matthew's chronicle, the patriarch may have provided some encouragement, material or otherwise, toward Matthew's project. Their association deepened when both Barsegh and Matthew took up residence in the town of K'esun some years later.<sup>40</sup> One hundred miles northwest of Edessa, K'esun was the center of a local Armenian *renovatio* in the early twelfth century. Barsegh's uncle Gregory II, after

36 Often known with the epithet V kayaser, meaning "lover of the martyrs," for his numerous translations of such stories from Greek and Syriac into Armenian; see Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 155–56; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 106–7. For a general biography and outline of his travels, see A. Kapoian-Kouymjian, *L'Égypte vue par des Arméniens* (Paris, 1988), 7–93.

37 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 213–14; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 141.

38 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 190–91; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 127–28. A *vardapet* is a unique rank within the Armenian church. It is essentially a scholarly position, invested with the authority to teach, and ranked second only to that of the bishop. Although the position did not have any sacramental duties attached to it, *vardapets* did have the power to excommunicate. Some historians have linked the institution to the office of the *herbad*, which fulfilled an analogous role

in Zoroastrianism; see R. Thomson, "Vardapet in the Early Armenian Church," *Le Muséon* 75 (1962): 367–84.

39 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 294; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 192. The annexation of the kingdom of Ani spurred a period of nomadism on the part of the patriarchs, and the political confusions of the late eleventh century brought schism to the church—at one time four different *kat'olikoi* were exercising their authority under the protection of various Armenian and Muslim princes. Barsegh had visited Edessa some ten years earlier (1091/2), while the city was still under Turkish control. It is possible that this visit also had an impact on Matthew; see Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 241; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 157.

40 Dulaurier, *Chronique*, ix–x. It is unclear when Matthew left Edessa for K'esun. He was still in Edessa when he began the third and last part of his chronicle

in 1116, but the last entry in his chronicle recounts an attack on K'esun by the Danishmend sultan Muhammad, and in a rare moment, Matthew turns to the first person: "God, who is compassionate and merciful in all things, in spite of our sins did not will that we fall into the hands of the enemy; rather he took pity on us . . . and so did not give the command for the infidels to attack the town" (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 367; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 238). Matthew's continuator Gregory also lived in K'esun, further suggesting that Matthew, at the end of his life at least, was living there. At the time of his death in 1113/4, Barsegh was residing in Behesni, a town only a few dozen miles to the north of K'esun. An assembly of bishops consecrated his nephew Gregory as his successor at the monastery of Karmir Vank', also situated in the territory of K'esun: Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 329–30; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 215.

years of traveling throughout the eastern Mediterranean, first took up residence in the city, dying there in 1105/6.<sup>41</sup> Whether inspired by the Pahlavunis or by K'esun's Armenian ruler Kogh<sup>42</sup> Vasil, Matthew enthusiastically promoted the city as the successor to the cultural and military glories of Ani. He found great satisfaction in noting that while the Franks of Edessa suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the Turks, Vasil was defending Christians and winning victories at Turkish expense. Vasil "brought together a regiment of Armenian troops; and brave as lions or lion cubs, these soldiers rushed against the infidels," decisively defeating them and capturing a number of prisoners and vast amounts of booty.<sup>43</sup> Lists of the great fighters in Vasil's army, such as his adopted son Vasil Dgha, his nephew Petros, and the warriors Aplasat' and Tiran, further fostered a heroic image. After Vasil's death in 1112/3, Matthew recalled that "around this prince were united the remnants of the Armenian army, members of the Bagratuni and Pahlavuni families, sons of the kings of Armenia, and finally all those of Pahlavuni lineage, together with the military aristocracy of Armenia."<sup>44</sup>

While Matthew's language echoed his earlier praise of Bagratuni heroes and linked Kogh Vasil to a bygone era, Vasil himself arose from humble origins; *kogh* (*gogh*) is an Armenian epithet meaning "robber." Matthew nevertheless claimed for him the majesty and proud heritage of the storied Armenian aristocracy through his unnamed wife, whom he suggested belonged to the ancient Kamsarakan family.<sup>45</sup> Her unlikely ancestry conveniently connected Vasil to the Pahlavunis and also to St. Gregory the Illuminator, the revered founder of Armenian Christianity, placing the Pahlavunis and Kogh Vasil's family as the leaders of a new Armenian society centered on K'esun. Matthew's promotion of the Pahlavunis and Kogh Vasil was tinged with the sweetness of nostalgia, for Kogh Vasil's principality fell to the combined hostilities of other Armenian lords and the Franks soon after Vasil's death in 1112/3. By the time Matthew began in 1116/7 to write the third section of his chronicle containing his descriptions of K'esun and Kogh Vasil, those heady days were gone, replaced by what he considered the comparatively grim rule of the Franks.

41 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 298–99; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 195–96. See also Kapoian-Kouymjian, *L'Égypte vue par des Arméniens*, 7–93.

42 Properly transliterated as "gogh," but commonly as "kogh."

43 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 306–7; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 200–201. Other chronicles do not mention these Armenian victories.

44 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 323–24; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 211.

45 As with the Pahlavunis, this claim would seem to be at the least an exaggeration. Kamsarakan glory faded after the disastrous aristocratic rebellion in 775–76 against the 'Abbāsids, and thereafter the family disappeared from the historical record; possibly they lingered on as minor nobles, conscious of their former dignity, and thus showed up in twelfth-century Syria to marry a daughter to Kogh Vasil, but this is unlikely.

## *Armenians Amid Enemies?* *Perceptions of Turks, Byzantines, and Franks*

Matthew's narratives and assessments of other peoples of the Levant, interspersed throughout his text, have been in large part what make him so interesting to modern historians. However, his depiction of non-Armenians was often contradictory, and historians have frequently assumed an anti-Byzantine or anti-Frankish bias without examining the depiction of such groups throughout Matthew's chronicle. The images of non-Armenians in all their complexity make sense only within his larger apocalyptic endeavor.

Matthew's stated purpose of explaining the disappearance of Armenian power at the hands of the Byzantines and Turks prepares the reader for a polemical account in which the Byzantines and the Turks oppress and persecute Armenian communities. Such an account would have established clear boundaries separating Armenians from their neighbors and insisted on a moral scheme of "good guys" and "bad guys," and in many cases, Matthew supplied just that. Mamlan, the Muslim emir of Azerbaijan, was "in his ferociousness like a bloodthirsty serpent . . . and spoke many blasphemous words to the heavens above."<sup>46</sup> Matthew likened the first appearance in Armenia of the Turks, "bloodthirsty beasts," to "winged serpents . . . intent on spreading like fire over all the lands of the Christian faithful."<sup>47</sup> An Armenian cleric in Matthew's account called them "accursed sons of Ham" and suggested that their closest ally was Satan.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise the Byzantines, "the apostate and perfidious nation of heretics,"<sup>49</sup> appear as both political oppressors and religious persecutors.<sup>50</sup> Matthew blamed a massacre in the Holy Sepulcher on Byzantine theologians who used the wrong calendar to calculate Easter, sarcastically commenting that "this was the situation the intelligent sages of the Greeks brought about."<sup>51</sup> He labeled the emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028–34) "a weak and timid person, besides being a very malicious and notorious blasphemer of the Orthodox faith."<sup>52</sup> A Byzantine attack on Armenia was remembered as "bringing the sword and enslavement . . . killing savagely like a poisonous

<sup>46</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 34–35; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 46; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 44.

<sup>48</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 72; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 59. For evil Turks, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 41–42; *Armenia*, 41; Turkish attack on Edessa, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*,

65; *Armenia*, 55; Turks as "venomous serpents," *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 146; *Armenia*, 102. For the connection between Satan and the Turks, see the discussion below on apocalypse.

<sup>49</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 96; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 72.

<sup>50</sup> For vicious Byzantines, Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 41;

Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 41; Byzantines plundering Christians, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 66; *Armenia*, 56. For attitudes toward crusaders and Franks, see below.

<sup>51</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 43; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 57; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia* 51.

serpent, in this manner being no different from the infidel peoples.”<sup>53</sup> Emperor Constantine X Doukas (1059–67), supported by the Greek patriarch and the leading Byzantine aristocrats, sought to destroy the Armenian faith and “substitute his demonic, confused, and defective doctrine.”<sup>54</sup>

Evil Turks and perfidious Byzantines find their complement in heroic Armenian leaders. Within the first few pages of his chronicle, for example, Matthew gave a dramatic account of a battle between the forces of Vasak Pahlavuni and the Muslim Daylamites of Azerbaijan. Matthew constructed his narrative with epic language: Vasak, with his beloved son Gregory and other illustrious noblemen, was making merry in his fortress of Bjni. Vasak saw a man coming in haste up the road on foot. Upon seeing him, Vasak said: “This man is a bearer of bad news.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed the man announced to the gathering that the whole district of Nig has been enslaved. “Roaring like a lion,” Vasak girded for battle with his troops, stopping first for communion and confession at a monastery on the way. They soon came to a village where the Muslims were massacring Christians gathered in a church, and killed three hundred of the invaders. Soon after, they confronted the main Muslim army, and Vasak engaged in single combat against “a dark Ethiopian” whom the Armenian eventually cleaved in two. Such an account delivers what the reader expects—noble Armenians going into battle against brave, though vicious Muslims, and triumphing through superior strength, virtue, and faith.<sup>56</sup>

This pat dichotomy has been what historians have noticed most often in Matthew’s account, leading to the suggestion that Matthew was biased against non-Armenians. Such passages, however, are misleading. For every episode demonizing the Byzantines and Turks, the reader can find another praising them. Although Matthew specifically identified the Byzantines and Turks as the destroyers of the Armenians, he did not consistently portray either group as evil or opposed to Armenian interests. He praised Basil II, the emperor who arguably did the most to undermine Armenian independence,

53 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 41; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 41. The same accusation was leveled against the Byzantines in 1035/6 (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 66; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia* 56).

54 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 159–60; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 109–10.

55 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 11; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 24.

56 Other such heroic scenes can be found in Matthew’s description of battle between King Ashot and a nameless Georgian prince: Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 9; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 23; Hasan and Chnchghuk avenging their father and brother: *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 91–92; *Armenia*, 69–70; see also the story of Liparit and Ch’ortuanel: *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 107–9; *Armenia*, 78–9; the death of Dawatanos: *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 142–3; *Armenia*, 100.

as “saintly” and as one who lived “a holy and chaste life . . . leaving behind a good memory.”<sup>57</sup> Matthew even documented Basil’s invasion of Armenia and annexation of Armenian kingdoms without criticism,<sup>58</sup> and instead offered his readers an unlikely story in which Basil received secret baptism at an Armenian monastery on the Black Mountain near Antioch and thus “became like an adopted father of the Armenian nation.”<sup>59</sup> The Turkish sultan Malik-Shah received an even more enthusiastic encomium upon death, remembered by Matthew as “father and parent to all, and a benevolent, merciful, and kind man towards all.”<sup>60</sup> The Turkish emir Malik-Ghazi Gümüshtegin Danishmend was even given Armenian ancestry in Matthew’s eulogy; at his death, he noted, “there was great sorrow among the Christian faithful who were under his rule.”<sup>61</sup>

Matthew’s attitude toward Frankish leaders was no less contradictory, and his depiction of Baldwin II, Count of Edessa (1100–1118) and later King of Jerusalem (1118–31), reveals the extent to which he could separate political actions and personal virtue, acts of betrayal and moral accountability. Portraying Baldwin’s rule of Edessa as particularly devastating for Armenian interests, a stab in the back after initial cooperation, Matthew documented a series of offenses perpetrated by the Frankish leader, including a massacre in Edessa in 1108/9, the temporary expulsion of the population of the city in 1113/4, connivance in the expulsion from Syria of Kogh Vasil’s heir, and, worst of all, the exile, torture, and murder of a number of prominent Armenian lords in 1117/8. Under Baldwin, Matthew insisted, “[the Franks] were continually occupied with such pursuits as these and did nothing but think up malicious and spiteful things; moreover, they had a love for perfidious and evil ways, having no regard for good and kindly actions.”<sup>62</sup>

It is with some surprise, then, that we read, in the paragraph immediately following the one quoted above, Matthew’s appraisal of Baldwin II’s personal and moral qualities. He reminded his reader,

57 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 55; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 49–50. Nor does Matthew acknowledge that the Byzantine army that attacked Armenia in 991/2, denounced as “killing savagely like a poisonous serpent, in this manner being no different from the infidel peoples” was, even under his own chronology, necessarily under orders from Basil II (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 41; *Armenia*, 41). The anonymous continuator of T’ovma Artsruni likewise praised Basil as “a

father”; see T’ovmaj Vardapet Arcruni, *Patmut’iwn Tann Arcruniats* (St. Petersburg, 1887), 307, translated by R. W. Thomson in Thomas Artsruni, *History of the House of the Artsrunik* (Detroit, 1985), 370. For other Armenian attitudes toward Basil II, see J.-P. Mahé, “Basile II et Byzance vus par Grigor Narekac’i,” *TyM* 11 (1991): 555–73. For Matthew’s attitude toward other Byzantine emperors, see below.

58 However, Matthew did criticize King Hovhannes of Ani as “cowardly”

for giving in to the emperor’s demands (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 49; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 46).

59 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 50; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 46.

60 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 243; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 158.

61 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 297; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 194.

62 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 339; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 221.

“Baldwin was one of the more illustrious members of the Frankish nobility; a valiant man and a warrior, exemplary in conduct, an enemy of sin, and by nature humble and modest.” Matthew did admit he had a bad side: “these good qualities were offset by ingenious avariciousness in seizing and accumulating the wealth of others and his insatiable love for money.” Yet he continues on to tell us that “he was very orthodox in his faith, and his ethical conduct and basic character were quite solid.”<sup>63</sup> Matthew’s contradictory statements of this nature make it difficult to use him as a barometer of Armenian attitudes toward other religious and ethnic groups, as historians have often done. Having abandoned a belief in Matthew’s hostility to non-Armenians, the reader may be tempted to suggest that Matthew was either wildly inconsistent or heavily edited. However, the chronicler’s apparent contradictions were not a result of inconsistency, but arose from his interest in tracing the portents of the coming Apocalypse as they appeared in the lives of individuals and communities. Baldwin’s actions were signs, not of Frankish character or the nature of their authority, but of the calamitous age in which he lived.

### *Betrayal*

Matthew found the “good guy/bad guy” narratives, on which historians have largely focused, uninteresting for two reasons: they failed to explain divisions among Armenians, and placed emphasis on people, rather than on the acts of violence themselves, as the example of Baldwin II above suggests. The actions ascribed to the Armenian king of Lori, Davit’ Anhoghin (David the Landless, 989–1046/8), make clear that Matthew viewed Armenians as equally susceptible to contradictory acts of violence as Franks, Byzantines, and Turks. David’s first appearance in Matthew’s chronicle was as the Christian warrior and king par excellence. Attacked by the Kurdish emir of Dvin, Abu’l-Uswar, David rallied troops from neighboring kingdoms with the help of the Albanian *kat’olikos*, who announced that “if there be any man or woman desirous of a martyr’s death, lo, the opportunity has presented itself.” Like the forces of the First Crusade, David’s army was composed not only of armed soldiers, but also included unarmed men, women and children, bishops, monks, and deacons. Wielding the weapons of faith, “the whole camp took up the cross and the Gospels; the forces of the wicked approached, and the multitude of priests stood opposite them.”<sup>64</sup> The defeat of the invading Muslim army was total. As the leader of such an army, David would seem to exemplify the pious prince-hero, fitting into the “us-them” dichotomy historians often expect from medieval chroniclers. Yet one year later (and two pages farther on in the modern edition), Matthew described David as “an official of King Hovhannes of Ani”

<sup>63</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 340; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 221–22.

<sup>64</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 81–82; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 64.

who had rebelled against the king and “subjected many regions to the sword and enslavement.”<sup>65</sup> Furthermore Matthew accused David, “through [his] treachery and deceit,”<sup>66</sup> of encouraging the Byzantines to attack Ani, perhaps the greatest crime in Matthew’s eyes.

Betrayal, Matthew made clear, was no respecter of persons. Betraying or being betrayed did not indicate an individual’s sinful nature, but rather the state of the larger Armenian community. Even the progenitor of the Pahlavunis, Vasak, could not escape betrayal. Exhausted by his epic battle with the Ethiopian described above, Vasak fell asleep on a mountainside underneath the protection of an outcropping of rocks. There he was found by some local villagers, who struck him on the head, then threw his body from the high rocks; he was thus killed by the very people he had fought to protect. It is hardly the heroic end one would expect for a patriarch of a family Matthew repeatedly praised. Another ruler whom Matthew respected, the “saintly and righteous” *kouropalatēs* Davit’ of Tayk’, died at the hands of his own archbishop, Hilarion, who after first attempting to poison him with the Eucharistic chalice during Mass, finally resorted to smothering Davit’ in his sleep.<sup>67</sup> The deaths of Vasak and Davit’ occur in the first twenty pages of Matthew’s account; many others could be listed from elsewhere in the text.<sup>68</sup>

The victim whose fate Matthew mourned most often was the kingdom and city of Ani. Its destruction and the exile of its kings was the most painful of the “horrible punishments” he described, and the betrayals associated with its fall were emblematic of what Armenians as a nation suffered.<sup>69</sup> Matthew considered the death of King Ashot IV of Ani (1021–39) a symbolic turning point in the fortunes of the

65 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 84–85; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 66. The switch from “king” to “official” is in part a reflection of Lori’s origin as a dependent province of the kingdom of Ani. Lori was given to David’s father Gurgen as something like an appanage. The kings of Ani were reluctant to accept Lori as fully independent.

66 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 88; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 68.

67 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 37–38; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 39. Matthew’s willingness to adapt historical events to his own purpose is again evident here. Matthew suggests that Basil II, one of his heroes, avenged David’s death, when in fact he seized David’s lands after his death as punishment for David’s participation in the revolt against him by Bardas Phokas; see Whittow,

*Byzantium*, 384. Aristakes Lastivertts’i believed that the poisoned Eucharistic chalice was the cause of David’s death, but did not hold the archbishop responsible. Instead he blamed a group of noblemen of Tayk’ (Aristakes Lastivertts’i, *Patmut’iwn*, 10).

68 For the anonymous *vestis* betrayed by the *doux* of Antioch to the Turks so that the *vestis* might not win fame and glory, see *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 157–58; *Armenia*, 108; on Liparit, whom the Byzantine army abandoned on the battlefield “so that he would not gain the reputation of being valiant,” see *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 107–9; *Armenia*, 79; on the four sons of Abel, besieged by the Byzantines (motivated by “venomous slanders”), one killed in his sleep by “comrades and old friends,” the other three imprisoned, see *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 109–12; *Armenia*,

80–81. Significantly this episode is the last in the first section of Matthew’s chronicle. Other such episodes include Sharaf-al-Daulah, emir of Mosul, “a kind man and benevolent towards the Christian faithful,” who was killed by his own troops (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 227–8; *Armenia*, 149); Malik-Shah, “a benevolent, merciful and kind man,” who was poisoned by his wife (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 243; *Armenia*, 158); the *kouropalatēs* T’oros killed by Edessans after they swore an oath to protect him (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 261–62; *Armenia*, 169–70).

69 Again his interest in Ani may reflect the patronage of the Pahlavunis, whose lands were a part of the Bagratuni kingdom of Ani, or perhaps point to Matthew’s own origins.

Armenians. After this, “the Armenian forces grew slack and scorned the art of war. They became subject to the Roman yoke, they reveled in drunkenness. . . . They departed from unity with one another and they no longer came to one another’s aid. They shed tears for the land which was being put to the sword, weeping together for its destruction and at the same time delivering up one another to the sword of the Greek nation.”<sup>70</sup>

Betrayal rarely benefited the traitor; it served only to place Armenians under “the Roman yoke.” Moral decline within the Armenian world was thus the complement of the assaults of Turks and Byzantines from without. However, betrayal within Armenian ranks preceded the onslaught of the Turks and the annexations of the Byzantines; the conquest of Armenia was thus a symptom, not a cause, of Armenian decline.

Betrayal and conflict dogged Ashot’s son and successor Gagik II (1042–45) at every turn. Matthew’s account of the loss of his kingdom is confused, perhaps a symptom of his chronological and geographical distance from the events he was trying to explain.<sup>71</sup> Matthew largely blamed an Armenian nobleman by the name of Sargis, who attempted to seize the kingdom for himself in 1041/2 following the death of Gagik’s uncle Hovhannes.<sup>72</sup> When that proved unsuccessful, Sargis instigated Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos’s ultimately successful attack on Gagik and Ani two years later.<sup>73</sup> At Sargis’s suggestion, the emperor invited Gagik to visit him in Constantinople. While the king was absent, Sargis and his supporters handed Ani over to the Byzantines, in the face of the opposition of the general populace, who “wept for their royal throne and, deeply lamenting, wept for their king Gagik.”<sup>74</sup> Strikingly, the weeping Armenians cursed those who betrayed Gagik—Sargis and his supporters—but not the Byzantines

70 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 79; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 63.

71 King Hovhannes-Smbat III of Ani, Gagik’s uncle, had promised his kingdom to the Byzantines after his death; according to Matthew, this was forestalled by a group of aristocrats led by Vahram Pahlavuni; see Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 85–86; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 66.

72 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 84; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 66. Yet Sargis was listed as one of the “eminent” men, along with Gregory Magistros (one of the Pahlavunis), sent to Hovhannes Kozern to hear his grim vision (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 67; Matthew of Edessa,

*Armenia*, 56). Matthew either did not know, or chose not to mention, the fact that Sargis was Gregory Magistros’s son-in-law; see genealogical chart in Leroy, “Grégoire Magistros.”

73 The royal heirs of Vaspurakan later fell victim to a similar betrayal. “A certain wicked and evil prince from the noblemen of Senek’erim went to the Greek emperor and severely denounced Atom and Abusahl, the sons of Senek’erim, saying: ‘They are intent on rebelling against you and thus causing you annoyance and trouble.’ The emperor Michael [IV the Paphlagonian], having heard this, believed these falsely spoken words. . . .” They saved themselves only by

throwing themselves on the tomb of Emperor Basil II, whom Matthew claimed as “an adopted father of the Armenian nation”; see Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 83–84; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 65.

74 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 96–97; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 72–73. Aristakes also detailed Sargis’s attempt to gain the throne in the wake of Hovhannes’s death, as well as Vahram Pahlavuni’s opposition to him (Aristakes, *Patmut’iwn*, 47–48). Aristakes, however, blamed Gagik for pardoning Sargis for his treason, and then for compounding his error by listening to his advice to go to Constantinople, ignoring Vahram’s counsel to the contrary (Aristakes, *Patmut’iwn*, 51).



into whose hands he was betrayed. The true threat was that of betrayal from within, not from Byzantine aggression or trickery.

As with the violence of the Turks, Franks, and Byzantines, Matthew was more interested in the act of betrayal than in the moral qualities of the betrayed, and frequently minimized the culpability of the betrayer by recounting their repentance or restitution. An early example is the Armenian general Aplgharip who, bitter over his replacement, betrayed his king, Derenik-Ashot of Vaspurakan (936/7–953), to an infidel army, which resulted not only in the king's capture but also in the slaughter of an Armenian army. Matthew, however, still considered the general "mighty and brave," even though excommunicated by the Armenian monks of Varag, and described his rescue of the king he betrayed.<sup>75</sup> When King Hovhannes-Smbat III of Ani (1020–40, Gagik's uncle) wrongly imprisoned the *kat'olikos* Petros in 1037/8, he installed the "eminent orator" and abbot Deoskoros (Dioscorus) as the new patriarch. Matthew adopted a mournful tone when discussing Dioscorus's subsequent excommunication and loss of reputation, although the abbot was clearly complicit in Petros's supersession and had "ordained unworthy people to the episcopate." After Petros was restored to his throne, Matthew mildly noted that "Dioscorus went back to Sanahin, his monastery, very much ashamed of what he had done."<sup>76</sup> Matthew later included Dioscorus in his list of "eminent Armenian vardapets," signaling that his character was unbesmirched by his act of betrayal.<sup>77</sup>

Nor were Armenians the only victims of betrayal from within. Matthew had a particular concern for Byzantine emperors, who suffered as much as did Armenian leaders from untrustworthy subordinates and family members, and were given frequent opportunities by Matthew to redeem themselves from the sin of betrayal. He recounted how John Tzimiskes "ruthlessly and savagely butchered the very benevolent" emperor Nikephoras II Phokas, praised as "filled with every virtue and upright quality."<sup>78</sup> Matthew believed that John later

75 Matthew misdated this event, mistakenly placing it in 965/6, more than twenty years after the king's death (Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 30–31; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 35–36). See also the story of Apirat, who rebelled against King Hovhannes of Ani and fled to Abu'l-Uswar, Kurdish emir of Dvin. Abu'l-Uswar, "vengeful in his heart," executed Apirat, a "brave man, one mighty and renowned in all of Armenia" (*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 10–11;

*Armenia*, 24). Apirat married into the Pahlavuni family and was the grandfather of the *kat'olikos* Barsegh Pahlavuni (*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 211; *Armenia*, 140).

76 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 77–78; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 62. Matthew uses an Armenian phrase (*kari jojzh*), combining two words, which both mean "very much." Together as a phrase they emphasized the strength of Dioscorus's shame, meaning "supremely, to the utmost."

77 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 179; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 121.

78 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 6–7; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 21–22. His murder of Phokas also led to the defeat of the Byzantine army at Amida, for God turned against them and gave victory to the Muslims (*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 14–16; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 26–27).

repented and joined a monastery,<sup>79</sup> though in fact he died while still emperor. Isaac I Komnenos (1057–59) was not liked “because he committed various perfidious acts against the Christians” and because he had “an evil nature”;<sup>80</sup> yet when God annihilated the Byzantine army while it was marching to battle with the Pechenegs, Isaac “realized that all this divine-rebuking wrath had fallen upon the Christians because of his iniquities, for by his sins he had angered God.” After seeking forgiveness, “he sought to leave the imperial throne and with fasting and weeping take up the life of a penitent.”<sup>81</sup> Even though Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–71) had sworn to exterminate the Armenian faith and had been cursed by Armenian monks, Matthew still disapproved of the “perfidious Romans” who secretly negotiated to betray him to Alp Arslan before the battle of Mantzikert,<sup>82</sup> and compared the blinding and subsequent death of Romanos to the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews.<sup>83</sup> The emperor Nikephoros III Botaniates (1078–81) left the throne after a year; his conscience bothered him, having seized power from Michael VII Doukas (1071–78), who “was benevolent and pious and endowed with all sorts of virtues and radiant holiness.” Both Botaniates and Doukas became monks.<sup>84</sup> If Matthew had written the *Inferno*, betrayers would be at worst somewhere in Limbo, not stuck in Satan’s mouth at the last circle of Hell.

79 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 29–30; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 34.

80 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 125; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 90.

81 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 126; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 91.

82 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 200; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 133–4.

83 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 203; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 135.

84 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 215; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 142.

## Apocalypse

The attacks on Artsn, Melitene, Sebasteia, and Ani, as well as the betrayal Matthew saw as endemic in Armenian and Byzantine society, were the result of a single cosmic event foretold by Scripture—the release of Satan from the thousand-year imprisonment in which Christ’s death and resurrection had placed him.<sup>85</sup> Nor was the vision of John in the *Book of Revelation* the only warning God gave humanity, for a series of apocalyptic visions were woven through Matthew’s chronicle, forming in a sense a table of contents and foreshadowing events that often appeared only a dozen pages later. The two visions of the hermit and vardapet Hovhannes Kozern<sup>86</sup> were the first and most detailed descriptions Matthew gave his readers. The first vision came in the year 1022/3, when on the third of October the trifecta of apocalyptic signs appeared on the same day—earthquake, eclipse, and blinding celestial light. When Armenian princes sought the meaning of these dire cosmic signs, Hovhannes told them the portents signaled that Satan had been released from his thousand-year imprisonment. Armenians would soon feel Satan’s presence both in the degradation of social and religious bonds within their communities, and in the devastation of the “ferocious and savage nation of the Turks.” Monks will abandon their monasteries, priests their churches, and family members will turn against each other, while Armenian cities and kingdom will fall to Turkish attack.<sup>87</sup> The hermit’s

**85** Rev 20:1–11. A large bibliography exists covering apocalypticism and millenarianism. On specific responses to the book of Revelation, see *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992); *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988); *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectations and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. R. Landes, A. Gow, and D. C. Van Meter (Oxford, 2003); *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Walker Bynum and P. Freedman (Philadelphia, 2000). Apocalyptic elements have a long history in Armenian historiography; see R. W. Thomson, “The Writing of History: The Development of the Armenian and Georgian Traditions,” in *Il Caucaso: Cerniero fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI): 20–26 aprile 1995* (Spoleto, 1996), 493–514. The fifth-century historian named Agat’angeghos recorded a vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator, which revealed the

divisions that would soon beset Armenian society (Agat’angeghos, *History of the Armenians*, trans. R. W. Thomson [Albany, N.Y., 1976], 273–97). See also Lewond, *History of Lewond the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, trans. Zaven Arzoumanian (Wynnewood, Pa., 1982), 131–32; and the two apocalypses at the end of Andrew Palmer’s *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 222–59, as well as A. Hultgård, “The Vision of Enoch the Just and Medieval Apocalypses,” in *Apocryphes arméniens: Transmission, traduction, création, iconographie, actes du colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe en langue arménienne*, Genève, 18–20 septembre 1997, ed. V. Calzolari Bouvier, J.-D. Kaestli, and B. Outtier (Lausanne, 1999), 147–58. The text is translated in J. Issaverdens, *The Uncanonical Writings of the Old Testament Found in the Armenian Mss. of the Library of St. Lazarus* (Venice, 1901), 306–23. See also R. W. Thomson, “Biblical Themes in the Armenian Historian Sebeos,” in *After Bardaisan:*

*Studies in Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honor of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers*, ed. G. J. Reinink and A. C. Klugkist (Leuven, 1999), 295–302. Thomson briefly addresses this theme in Matthew of Edessa: “History’ in Medieval Armenian Historians,” in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-third Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. A. Eastmond (Aldershot, 2001), 89–99, as well as in “Crusades through Armenian Eyes,” 74–75.

**86** Hovhannes also appeared in the eleventh-century account of Aristakes Lastiverts’i, where he is noted as an author of a book on faith (Aristakes, *Patmut’iwn*, 13).

**87** Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 52–55; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 47–49. For similar Byzantine concerns around the same time, see P. Magdalino, “The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda,” in *The Making of Byzantine History*, ed. R. Beaton and C. Roueché (Aldershot, 1993), 3–34; Magdalino, “The Year 1000 in Byzantium,” in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. P. Magdalino (Leiden, 2003), 233–70.

vision thus predicted the betrayals within Armenian society and the “horrible punishments” Armenians suffered at the hands of other peoples that were Matthew’s principal theme. While elsewhere Matthew explicitly blamed the Byzantines and the Turks for Armenia’s decline, Hovhannes’s revelation made Satan the puppet-master who was responsible for the violence and betrayal endemic in Matthew’s world.

In 1036/7 another earthquake and eclipse again struck fear into the hearts of the Armenians, and Matthew had the hermit reiterate his former predictions in greater detail.<sup>88</sup> Again Hovhannes emphasized Satan’s release and his close association with the Turks, as well as the moral decline that would undermine the social bonds at the heart of Armenian society. His second prediction, however, added a new hopeful element to his previous grim prophecy. After sixty years, “the valiant nation called the Franks will rise up; with a great number of troops they will capture the holy city of Jerusalem, and the Holy Sepulcher, which contained God, will be freed from bondage.”<sup>89</sup>

Yet the crusaders were only the harbingers of Christian renewal, for their arrival would be followed by a forty-year period featuring suffering seven times worse than that which accompanied the initial Turkish invasion. True salvation would come only when “the Roman Emperor will be awakened as if from a sleep, and like an eagle, rapidly will come against the Turks with a very great army, as numerous as the sands of the seashore. He will march forth like a burning fire, and all creatures will tremble in fear of him.”<sup>90</sup> The emperor’s triumph over the Muslims will be complete, and the way made clear for the second coming of Christ, though Matthew never directly discussed the final days and the Last Judgment.

Hovhannes’s predictions were not the only ones Matthew recorded. He noted that the division of the Armenian patriarchate among six rival *kat’olikoi* in the 1080s had been predicted by Saint Sahak, one of the earliest Armenian patriarchs.<sup>91</sup> The First Crusade, “the coming of the Westerners,” was, according to Matthew, foreseen by Saint Nerses, another early *kat’olikos*. When the crusaders

<sup>88</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 68, 71; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 57, 58. Hovhannes made reference to the signs of fourteen years earlier; this is mistranslated as “forty” by Dostourian.

<sup>89</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 66–74; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 56–60. For more on Franks as apocalyptic signs, see Thomson, “Crusades through Armenian Eyes,” 74–75.

<sup>90</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 73; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 60.

<sup>91</sup> Matthew reminds the reader that Hovhannes Kozern also predicted this (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 230; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 151). See also N. Garsoïan, “Reality and Myth in Armenian History,” in *The East and the Meaning of History: International Conference (23–27 November 1992)* (Rome, 1994), 137–42.

captured Jerusalem, Matthew assured his reader that this, too, was predicted by Nerses, adding “but because of their sins the city once again will fall into the hands of the infidels.”<sup>92</sup> Matthew even had a Syrian hermit named Mark reiterate Hovhannes’s predictions a few years after the First Crusade, lest his reader forget their importance.<sup>93</sup>

Alongside apocalyptic visions (and sometimes accompanying them, as we have seen with Hovhannes Kozern), Matthew noted cataclysmic events such as comets, earthquakes, and eclipses occurring on a regular basis, explicit reminders of the final disaster to come.<sup>94</sup> A star that appeared in 1003/4, accompanied by an earthquake and a plague, was “an omen of the wrath [*barkut’iwn*] of God towards all living creatures and also a sign of the end of the world.”<sup>95</sup> Fire from heaven destroyed the church of St. Peter in Antioch (a punishment intended to recall that of Sodom, for Matthew alleged that Antioch participated in the same sin), and an earthquake there swallowed ten thousand Christians.<sup>96</sup> In 1058/9 poisonous red snow fell for sixty days on northern Syria, killing man and beast, “a horrible sign of [God’s] great wrath [*barkut’iwn*].”<sup>97</sup> Comets appeared in 1066/7, 1070/1, and 1097/8, and Matthew explicitly linked them to God’s anger, Christian sin, Turkish attack, or imminent apocalypse.<sup>98</sup> The arrival of the crusaders was heralded by no less than four celestial events.

Predictions and visions were more than simply warnings to Armenian communities; they served to highlight events of particular significance to Matthew. He exhorted his reader to remember the grim events of the past, declaring the purpose of his chronicle to be that “these persons shall learn about the terrible misfortunes which occurred in those times and, once again bringing these things to mind, shall remember the divine wrath [*barkut’iwn*] which we

92 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 267; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 172. See also Thomson, “Crusades through Armenian Eyes,” 71–82.

93 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 300–301; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 196.

94 The very first incident Matthew described in his chronicle was a famine and plague of locusts around Edessa and Mesopotamia, though he did not explicitly designate this a sign as he did other such events (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 1; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 19).

95 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 45–46; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 43.

96 It was also punishment for the incineration of a Syrian Orthodox [Jacobite] Bible, burnt by the Byzantine patriarch and his priests (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 115–17; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 85–86). Other earthquakes are cited in 1090/1 (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 241; *Armenia*, 157) and in 1114/5, again citing God’s *barkut’iwn* (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 331; *Armenia*, 216).

97 This was the same year as the sack of Melitene (Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 131; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 93); another plague occurred in 1003/4 (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 45–46; *Armenia*, 43).

98 Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 78 (death of Ashot IV Bagratuni), 185 (preceding the attacks of the Turk Afshin), 193 (accompanying the attacks of Alp Arslan), 260 (in conjunction with the First Crusade), 304 (at the same time as the Armenian revolt in Aplast’an), 316 (massacre of the citizens of Edessa); Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 62, 124, 129, 168, 198, 206. Such signs also impacted Muslim communities: fire from heaven destroyed a mosque in Amida in 1115/6 (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 334–35; *Armenia*, 218); and a similar event in Baghdad in 1121/2, again an expression of God’s *barkut’iwn* (*Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 350–51; *Armenia*, 228).

received from God, the righteous judge, as a penalty for our sins.” Most importantly, however, the chronicler insisted on connecting the suffering of Armenians in the past to that of his own community. “Once again we find ourselves inflicted with the same chastisement for our sins, a chastisement which we received for that which we justly deserve.”<sup>99</sup>

Matthew clearly feared that Armenians would fail to recognize the prophecies of their patriarchs and hermits unfolding around them. Indeed he provided examples of such improvident Armenians, such as those seized in 1062/3 by a Turkish group, who asked their captives,

“Why did you become enslaved, [allowing yourself] to be in such an unprepared state, and why were you unable to have foresight, either by ear or through a sign, so that you might have fled from us?” The [Armenian] captives answered: “We were unable to realize anything.” Then the infidel woman said: “Lo, this was the sign of your destruction; when in the evening your cock crowed and your cattle and sheep squatted to defecate, this was the sign for the calamity.” The captives answered: “All that had happened to us many times in our country, but we were never able to realize that it was a sign for us of the calamity (*barkut’iwn*).”<sup>100</sup>

Yet not all Armenians were ignorant of the coming calamity. King Senek’erim-Hovhannes of Vaspurakan (1003–21) had better instincts than did the confused captives. After the first battle in which he encountered Turkish forces, “[he] examined the chronicles and utterances of the divinely-inspired prophets, the holy vardapets, and found written in these books the time specified for the coming of the forces and soldiers of the Turks. He also learned of the impending destruction and end of the whole world. . . .”<sup>101</sup> Senerk’erim decided to exchange his kingdom for territories within the Byzantine Empire, hoping that he would be safer there.

Matthew’s apocalyptic concerns emerge not only through recitation of prophecies, accounts of disastrous weather, earthquakes, and Turkish attacks, but also, perhaps most importantly, in the decline of faith and morality among Christians, particularly Armenians. When the Armenian community of Aplast’an (modern Elbistan in Anatolia)

<sup>99</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 113–14; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 83–84.

<sup>100</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 141; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 99.

<sup>101</sup> Matt’eos Urhayets’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn*, 48; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 45. Matthew (or Senek’erim) was mistaken; they were more likely raiders from Azerbaijan; see A. E. Redgate, *The Armenians* (Oxford, 1998), 226.

tired of Frankish oppression, they invited Turkish soldiers to occupy their town, a decision that led to a battle and subsequent massacre of the entire Frankish garrison by the local population. Yet Matthew turned his interest away from the explicit violence of the story and focused on the more subtle social and moral effects Satan's presence had engendered. Through Frankish oppression Satan had not only alienated the Armenians and provoked a massacre but, in Matthew's description, had poisoned the land itself. "Because of the Franks, the land became barren. The vineyards and orchards withered, the fields became covered in thistles, and the springs dried up. Friendship and happiness between friends was destroyed."<sup>102</sup> Just as Hovhannes predicted, people abandoned the church and hatred spread everywhere. Yet this episode was not a sign of inherent Frankish evil, of little interest to Matthew, but a sign of the state of the world. The Franks were victims, too, just as Adam had been a victim of Satan's wiles in the garden of Eden. The consequences of sin at the beginning and end of time extended to the fertility of the earth itself; in Aplast'an and in Eden, thistles grew in what were once fertile fields.<sup>103</sup>

### *Peace and Its Dangers*

The prophecy of Hovhannes Kozern was a template Matthew intended as a guide to the recent past and present. The period of Matthew's own life corresponded to the period of Turkish oppression "seven times worse" that followed the conquest of Jerusalem by the "valiant nation of the Franks." Matthew reminded his readers that "since the day the Frankish nation went forth, not one good or favorable omen appeared; on the contrary, all the omens pointed to the calamity, destruction, ruin, and disruption of the land through death, slaughter, famine, and other catastrophes."<sup>104</sup> All that remained to complete Kozern's prophecy was the appearance of the last Roman emperor, which, according to the hermit's timetable, should have happened around 1148.<sup>105</sup> Again this can be tied to events contemporary with Matthew. The expansion of Byzantine power under the Komnenian emperors matched Kozern's predictions of imperial triumph, and by the time Matthew was finishing his chronicle in the 1130s, John Komnenos had intimidated the Franks, Armenians, and Turks in northern Syria into acknowledging his power. Clearly his complete triumph was not far off.

<sup>102</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 302–4; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 197–98.

<sup>103</sup> Gen. 3:18.

<sup>104</sup> Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 270; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 175.

<sup>105</sup> For Byzantine attitudes toward the last emperor at this time, see Magdalino, "History of the Future," 26–27.

Yet other aspects of Hovhannes' vision were more difficult to discern. Even Matthew had a hard time finding episodes of political or military oppression affecting Armenians occurring in the 1120s and 30s that matched the drama of the initial Turkish attacks on Armenian cities such as Ani and Artsn in the eleventh century. In 1124/5 he even recorded that Ani had been liberated from the yoke of Muslim rule by "the saintly and virtuous king" David, ruler of the Georgians; in response to the city's liberation, "there was rejoicing throughout all Armenia."<sup>106</sup> This hardly seems seven times worse than the sack of the city some sixty years before. Instead Matthew perceived the hermit's prophecy fulfilled, as at Aplast'an, in the disintegration of the social and moral bonds of society, equally a sign of satanic influence. Just as Armenian betrayal had preceded Turkish sieges, Matthew, as the world's end drew near, sought Satan in the sapping of the natural bonds of family, religion, and community, rather than in the savagery of Turkish raids.

Matthew was not entirely wrong in perceiving a world in which ethnic and religious boundaries were crumbling, particularly for diasporic Armenians. Armenian generals and aristocrats moved easily among Byzantines, Turks, and Franks, with little sense of political betrayal or cultural loss, a fluidity characteristic of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Middle East. Particularly prone to such peripateticism were the new military elites spawned by Byzantine and Armenian expansion in the tenth century. The Armenian nobleman Aplasat', for example, left the service of Kogh Vasil after a dispute and, instead of joining the forces of another Armenian lord, attached himself for a time to Baldwin II of Edessa.<sup>107</sup> Even Matthew's heroes, the Pahlavunis, showed little regard for such boundaries. Matthew depicted them as Armenian patriots, yet the Pahlavunis had little compunction in taking up employment with their former opponents, the Byzantines. Although the *sparapet* Vahram had defended Ani from Byzantine attack,<sup>108</sup> he died a few years later serving in the imperial army.<sup>109</sup> His nephew Gregory Magistros and Gregory's sons accepted military positions and political honors from the emperor. *Kat'olikos* Gregory II wandered from Ani to Rome, as well as visiting Fatimid Egypt, where he named his nephew Gregory *kat'olikos* for the large Armenian community established there by a series of Armenian viziers who ruled Fatimid Egypt from 1073 to 1121.<sup>110</sup>

106 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 359; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 233.

107 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 310–11; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 202–3.

108 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 85–86; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 66–67.

109 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 98; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 73–4.

110 Matt'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 211; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 140. See also Kapoian-Kouymjian, *L'Égypte vue par des Arméniens*, 7–93.



Although Armenia sat on the outer limits of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds geographically, conquest by Byzantines and Muslims had led to the establishment of Armenian communities far abroad in Constantinople, Edessa, and Alexandria, as well as in places such as Sicily and Bulgaria. For many Armenians, these places were no more foreign than Ani and Kars. Matthew's chronicle was an argument to remind Armenians that this larger world was a dangerous one in which Armenians should never feel too comfortable.

The experience of other Christian minorities in the Islamic world was similar. The memoirs of a Nestorian Christian doctor named Ibn Butlan, living in the middle to late eleventh century, detailed his life as a peripatetic doctor, practicing his craft at various times in Aleppo and Cairo as well as Antioch and Constantinople. Yet his account showed more concern with the professional jealousy of rival doctors than with the seemingly disparate political, religious, and ethnic realms through which he traveled.<sup>111</sup> That is, professional identities—doctor, soldier—often were as important as, and at times more important than, ethnicity or religion. In the eyes of Matthew, this cultural fluidity was not a good thing, but a sign of the Satan-induced crumbling of natural social bonds. His chronicle was a reminder to Armenians of the violence they had suffered in the past; he clearly feared that they were blind to its contemporary significance and therefore frequently urged his readers to remember the omens, predictions, and evidence of God's anger.<sup>112</sup> The peacefulness and integration of Matthew's own day was thus the greatest threat, for it was the most insidious expression of Satan's power.

For Matthew the problem tolerance presented was not its absence, but its confusing, ambiguous, and anomalous presence. While stories of violence and massacre appealed to Frankish and Muslim chroniclers because they clearly delineated separation among communities, for Matthew violence was not the opposite of tolerance, but phenomenologically the same thing—the social manifestation of Satan's power in the world. With this view, Matthew's understanding of the Last Days makes more sense. He had little interest in the final event itself. He never mentioned the return of Jesus Christ or the Last Judgment, and his account of the time leading up to the Apocalypse depended entirely on widely held beliefs about the figure of the Last Emperor, whom Matthew was content to identify as a Byzantine, despite his devotion to Armenian kingship. Matthew did not seek to prepare Armenians for the end of the world, but to open their eyes to the erosion of their culture and community by the military, political, and cultural power of the Byzantines, Turks, and Franks.

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111 Lawrence Conrad, "Ibn Butlan in *Bilad al-Sham*: The Career of a Traveling Christian Physician," in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Leiden, 2001), 131–58.

112 Mat'eos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, 274; Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia*, 177.